

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Landmark/District:	GWU/Old West End HD	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agenda
Address:	1900 F Street, NW	<input type="checkbox"/> Consent
Meeting Date:	October 31, 2019	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Concept
Case Number:	HPA 19-541	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Alteration
		<input type="checkbox"/> New Construction
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Demolition
		<input type="checkbox"/> Subdivision

The George Washington University, with plans prepared by VMDO Architects, seeks conceptual design review for renovation of Thurston Hall, a contributing building to the George Washington University/Old West End Historic District.

Property Description

Designed by Harvey H. Warwick and built originally as the Park Central Apartment Building in 1928, this Art Deco/Moderne style building was part of the new wave of large apartment buildings constructed in the 1920s and 1930s in the West End catering to government workers. When it was built, the nine-story, 320-unit Park Central was one of the largest ‘elevator apartment-hotels’ in the city. Now known as Thurston Hall, the building serves as a residence hall for over 800 GWU students.

Proposal

The project was presented to HRPB at the September hearing in which the architect presented a comprehensive interior renovation including: construction of a new occupied penthouse and vegetated roof, a canopy over the courtyard, a cut away of the building at the three upper floors and carving out of interior spaces on the south elevation, alterations to the interior courtyard elevations, and streetscape alterations.

At that meeting, the Board determined that the courtyard was an interior space and therefore not under its purview but did express some concerns about the loss of the masonry wall at the exterior south elevation. Two revised options have been prepared to respond to the Board’s comments.

Option A cuts away two floors of the exterior central bay instead of three to respond to the Board’s comment about the loss of exterior fabric. In this option the masonry wall is cut away at the 8th and 9th floors, and the glazing from the window openings would be removed at the 7th floor to allow air into the courtyard space.

Option B cuts away three floors – similarly to the originally proposed design—but infills the void with a framework of an open metal screen element in the same plane as the masonry wall designed to replicate the rhythm and scale of the former window openings. This concept responds to the Board’s concern about the large void on the side elevation by filling the void with structure and screen element while still achieving the desired effect of air and light entering the courtyard space.

Evaluation

The Board has typically granted greater flexibility for changes on secondary elevations that are minimally or not visible from public street view, as is the case with the south elevation of Thurston Hall which faces a service alley and is a secondary elevation with minimal visibility from 19th Street.

Of the revised options, A reduces the extent of removal with a smaller cut into the secondary wall, while B proposes the same amount of removal as last month's proposal while seeking to reduce the perception of the change in massing by infilling the opening with a metal screen. HPO finds that either option would be compatible with the character of the building and the historic district. While some of the original fabric would be removed in each, the overall massing would remain legible and the extent of removal does not significantly affect the building's historic character.

Recommendation

HPO recommends that the Board find the revised concepts consistent with the preservation act and delegate final approval to staff.

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